



Bi terrorism Preparedness and Response

A PUBLICATION OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Preparedness and Response:

What You Can Do to Protect Your Family

Los Angeles County has emergency response plans in case of chemical, biological or nuclear attack and other disasters. Practice drills and exercises are conducted on a regular basis. Our emergency response plans bring together many agencies, including law enforcement, health, fire departments, and other local and federal agencies.

This pamphlet is designed to help answer questions you may have about terrorist attacks with a special focus on bioterrorism. Bioterrorism (BT) is the use of biological agents to cause illness to meet terrorist aims. Bioterrorism agents include living microorganisms (bacteria, protozoa, viruses, and fungi) and toxins (chemicals) made by microorganisms, plants or animals.

How prepared is Los Angeles County for a biological terrorism attack?

The Health Department has developed systems for rapid detection and investigation of disease outbreaks that could be the first indication of a biological attack. Early detection of illness caused by a bioterrorist attack saves lives. The earlier an act of BT is detected, the earlier it can be controlled. Local hospitals and doctors will be the first to see illness in the event of a BT attack. Health care staff assist in early detection efforts by reporting unusual disease occurrence to the Health Department and by learning the syndromes associated with possible bioterrorist disease agents.

What can I do to protect myself and my family against bioterrorism?

The Health Department is well prepared to respond to public health emergencies. In emergencies the Health Department works with law enforcement, fire departments, health care facilities and voluntary agencies like the Red Cross. If immediate action on your part is needed to protect your health from a disease outbreak, that information will be made public by the Health Department via the media. As you would for other emergency situations, have your list of important telephone numbers – including your physician's number – available.

Should my doctor prescribe preventive antibiotics against anthrax, plague, or other BT threat diseases?

No. Using antibiotics at the wrong time or in the wrong way can lead to harmful side effects (especially for pregnant women and children) and can make bacteria and other organisms resistant to antibiotics. There are supplies of antidotes and antibiotics available in the event of an emergency.

Should I buy gas masks for myself and my family?

The Health Department does not recommend that citizens purchase gas masks. Most gas masks are not designed to protect against biologic agents and are only effective against chemical agents if worn at the time of release. They are also impractical because the cartridges must be changed every few hours. Gas masks must be fitted properly; if not, serious injury or even death could result.

What can I do to prepare for a terrorist attack?

In Los Angeles County we have always had to be prepared for earthquakes. Preparing for a terrorist incident is much like preparing for an earthquake or other disaster. Disasters can strike quickly and without warning. Families can – and do – cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team.

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit with items you may need in an emergency. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags or covered trash containers. Include:

- ❖ A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that will not spoil. Include a can opener for canned goods.
- ❖ One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person
- ❖ A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- ❖ Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- ❖ An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- ❖ Sanitation supplies.
- ❖ Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- ❖ An extra pair of glasses.
- ❖ Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

What specific things should I do in the case of a terrorist attack?

While a chemical, biological or nuclear attack is possible, the chances of such an attack are very low. The information below will give you positive steps you can take in the event of an attack.

| Type of Attack | What you should do: |
|-------------------------------|---|
| CHEMICAL LIQUID ATTACK | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Move away from the substance.2. Cover up if you cannot avoid getting some of it on you.3. If you get some material on your clothing, take the clothing off, and then immediately rinse your skin with soap and water.4. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. |
| CHEMICAL GAS ATTACK | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Get away from the cloud.2. If you are outside, cover your mouth with a folded cloth.3. If you are in your car, roll up the windows, close the vents, and turn the ventilation system off.4. If you are at home, get in the house, close the windows and doors and turn the ventilation system off.5. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. |
| BIOLOGICAL ATTACK | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Move away from the substance.2. Cover your mouth with a folded cloth.3. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. |
| NUCLEAR ATTACK | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If you see the flash take cover and get low to reduce the effect of the shockwave. If you hear the blast or have felt the shockwave take cover to avoid debris.2. Move away from the debris cloud.3. If you cannot get away from the debris cloud, cover your mouth with a folded cloth and exit the cloud as soon as possible.4. If you get debris on you, remove your clothing. Then, using a scrub brush, wash the affected area with soap and water.5. Get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. |



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